

## BOOK REVIEW

### Toward Alternate Latinx Masculinities

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*Decolonizing Latinx Masculinities*. Edited by Arturo J. Aldama and Frederick Luis Aldama. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2020. 345 pages. \$35.00 (paper).

The urgency to detach harmful forms of masculinity from heteropatriarchy's violent grasp is no small task. It is arduous and requires an amalgam of historical reckoning, self-reflection, and a commitment to actively challenging toxic masculinity wherever it presents itself. In a stunning collection of essays that provide guidance for this necessary undertaking, *Decolonizing Latinx Masculinities*, co-edited by Arturo J. Aldama and Frederick Luis Aldama, provides a deeper look into how Latinx masculinities are formed and performed through literary, cinematic, cultural and political mediums. The authors in this book importantly place Chicana/Latina feminisms, queer theory, and decolonial thought and practice at the center of their analytical and creative approaches with the hope of aligning the future of Latinx masculinities with their ongoing struggles for liberation. Both timely and long overdue, *Decolonizing Latinx Masculinities* is an excellent contribution to Latina/o/x and Gender Studies.

The essays in the first part of the book survey multiple objects of analysis beginning with nineteenth-century racialized constructions of Mexican masculinity through the figure of Billy the Kid. A metonymic figure, Billy the Kid, whose stories were disseminated throughout the U.S. by way of turn-of-the-century dime novels, aided in placing "Mexicanos in the public imagination as 'semicivilized' citizens" (29). Similarly, the subsequent essay

offers a critique of twenty-first century Trumpian rhetoric that constructs Latina/o/x and Latin American men as disease-ridden, dangerous, and undesirable. Almost all the authors in part one shape their analysis using autoethnography or *testimonio* narratives that productively blur the lines between academic scholarship, personal autobiographical history, and community-based work. This style of feminist praxis, made even more evident by meditations on Chicago's urban food project and muralist Norma Montoya in the final two essays, ushers in a form of decolonized masculinity that privileges community over individuality.

The second and third parts of the book move away from critical evaluations of political rhetoric, oneself, and community-based work to depictions of Latina/o/x masculinities on television, film, and literature. In order to situate masculinity historically, Ellie Hernandez expertly documents the sex/gender system put in place by Spanish colonial forces. This system attempted to eradicate the fluid gender and sexual order practiced in Indigenous societies throughout the Americas in favor of a rigid gender and sexual binary model. The legacies of this model thus permeate literary markets and visual media well into the twenty-first century. The essays in this section attempt to redress and detoxify its continued hold on ideologies and people through and beyond Hollywood and popular literary publishing houses. Subjects of cinematic analysis include, among others, Aurora Guerrero's *Mosquita y Mari* and Jeremiah Zagar's film adaptation of *We the Animals*, both of which depict queer coming of age narratives where the characters navigate a merciless heteronormative world. The Xicana teenagers in the former film have to further deal with the violent misogyny present in their family and in their East Los Angeles barrio. Following a similar thread, authors in this section evaluate the representation of female masculinity through lesbian ranchera singer Chavela Vargas and Ser Anzoategui's performance in the television show

*Vida* to further demonstrate ongoing violence directed at nonnormative persons and present decolonial and expansive possibilities for female masculine utopias.

The last set of essays deals with reimagining masculinities and gender performance through the “x” in Latinx—a term that emerged in online, queer activist circles and has gained traction within academic and popular spaces. In “Trans\*lating the Genderqueer-X through Caxcan, Nahuatl, and Xicanx Indígena Knowledge,” Jennie Luna and Gabriel S. Estrada deliver an analysis of how the “x” harkens back to Nahuatl language, which necessarily decolonizes linguistic markers of place-naming and being. Although careful to acknowledge the tremendous variations of Indigenous languages in Mexico alone, the authors note that the “x” has grown beyond Mexica-centric and Chicano nationalist paradigms. The concluding section notes how Latinx subjectivities merge queer, feminist, and decolonial futures with contributor Laura Malaver’s observation that “performances of masculine comportment and expression within the framework of queer of color critique allow us to... embrace masculinity as a gender expression without attending to the social expectation that masculinity equates to toxic behaviors informed by processes of racialization and capitalism” (281). The book, it seems, sees this as the ultimate goal of masculine futurity.

The essays in this collection successfully provide a tremendous assortment of scholarly and creative work dedicated to delinking masculinity from its vexed past. For anyone interested in conversations about the ways in which Latinx masculinity operates and can operate toward a safer and just place for feminine identified persons, while also allowing newfound masculinities to take shape and evolve, this book is surely a step in the right direction.

